CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1.   (Previously Presented) A postage evidencing meter operable to be used by a plurality of users, comprising:

an authorization database having a plurality of entries, wherein each entry is associated with a user of the plurality of users, and each entry includes at least one parameter, wherein the parameter limits an ability of the associated user to evidence postage using the meter; and

a processor operable to access said authorization database and limit the ability of a user of the plurality of users to evidence postage using the meter in accordance with the parameter of the entry associated with the user.

2.   (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameter comprises:

a maximum postage amount that [[a]] the associated user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

3.   (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameter comprises:

a period of time during which [[a]] the associated user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

4.   (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameter comprises:

a maximum postage amount that [[a]] said associated user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage over a selected period of time.

5.   (Original) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 further comprising:
a user interface;
a printer; and
a security module.

6.   (Original) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the authorization database is stored on a removable storage device.

7.   (Original) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the authorization database is coupled to the meter via a communication link to a remote postage information system.

8.   (Previously Presented) A system for controlling postage usage, said system comprising:

at least one postage evidencing meter comprising a processor, and a communication module for providing a communication link between the postage evidencing meter and a postage information system;

wherein the postage information system includes a database for separately storing at least one postage usage parameter for each user of a plurality of users of the meter, wherein the parameter for the user limits an ability of the user associated with said parameter to evidence postage using the meter; and

wherein the processor is operable to access said database through said communication module to limit the ability of a user of said plurality of users to evidence postage in accordance with the associated parameter.

9.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the parameter comprises:

a maximum postage amount that [[a]] the associated user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

10.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the parameter comprises:

a period of time during which [[a]] the associated user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

11.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include:

a maximum postage amount that a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage during a selected period of time.

12.   (Original) The system of claim 8 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

13.   (Original) The system of claim 8 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

14.   (Canceled)

15.   (Previously Presented) A system for controlling postage usage, comprising:

at least two postage evidencing meters, each meter having a processor and a communication module for providing a communication link between the at least two meters, at least one postage evidencing meter of said at least two postage evidencing meters separately storing at least one postage usage parameter for each user of a plurality of users;

wherein said postage usage parameters define different postage evidencing limits with respect to each user of said plurality of users;

wherein at least one postage usage parameter for at least one selected user of said plurality of users is exchanged between said meters via the communication link; and

wherein the processor of the meter receiving said postage usage parameter controls an ability of the selected user associated with the postage usage parameter to evidence postage using the receiving meter in accordance with the received postage usage parameter.

16.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein the parameter comprises:

a maximum postage amount that the selected user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

17.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein the parameter comprises:

a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced by the selected user during a selected period of time.

18.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein the parameter comprises at least one of:

a maximum postage amount that the selected user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage; and

a period of time during which the selected user is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

19.   (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

20.   (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

21.   (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein said communication link is used to transfer postage values securely between the at least two meters using cryptographic techniques.

22.   (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the exchange of postage usage parameters is bi-directional.

23.   (Withdrawn) A method for transferring postage value between postage evidencing devices, comprising:

receiving a request for a postage value transfer, the request identifying a destination device and an amount of postage value to be transferred;

creating a postage value token at a first postage evidencing device;

subtracting the postage value amount from registers in the first postage evidencing device;

transferring the postage value token to a second postage evidencing device;

verifying the postage value token at the second postage evidencing device; and

adding the postage value to registers at the second postage evidencing device.

24.   (Withdrawn) The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 further comprising:

transferring the postage value using a communications link between the first and second postage evidencing devices.

25.   (Withdrawn) The method for transferring postage value of claim 24 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

26.   (Withdrawn) The method for transferring postage value of claim 24 wherein the communication link is a wireline link.

27.   (Withdrawn) The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 further comprising:

transferring the postage value using a removable storage device.

28.   (Withdrawn) The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 wherein the postage value token is a cryptographically secure token.

29.   (Currently Amended) A method for controlling postage usage comprising:

separately storing at least one postage usage parameter for each user of a plurality of users of a postage meter in a postage usage database, wherein said postage usage parameters establish separate postage evidencing limits for each user of said plurality of users;

receiving a request to evidence postage from a user of said plurality of users;

(a)   determining, based on the requesting user's postage usage parameter, if sufficient postage is available to fulfill the request for the requesting user;

(b)   determining if sufficient postage is available from an available postage balance of [[a]] said postage meter used for evidencing postage to fulfill the request for the requesting user;

evidencing a requested postage amount if said (a) determining is affirmative and if said (b) determining is affirmative;

recording postage usage for the requesting user in the postage usage database; and

deducting an amount of postage used to fulfill the request for the requesting user from the available postage balance.

30.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising:

authenticating the requesting user.

31.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising:

receiving a request to configure parameters for the requesting user; and

modifying postage usage limits in the postage usage database.

32.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31 wherein the usage limit is at least one of:

a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced for the requesting user;

a time period during which the requesting user is authorized to evidence postage; and

a class of postage that the requesting user is authorized to evidence.

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising:

receiving a request to purchase postage for the requesting user; and

adding a purchased postage value to the postage usage database for the requesting user.

34.   (Previously Presented) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1, wherein the at least one parameter comprises:

at least one of time and amount.

35.   (Previously Presented) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1, wherein the at least one parameter comprises:

at least two parameters.

36.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 8, wherein the at least one parameter comprises:

at least one of time and amount.

37.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 8, wherein the at least one parameter comprises:

at least two parameters.

38.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the at least one parameter comprises:

at least two parameters.